Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory. Lisa Yoneyama. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, xiii + 217 pp., notes, bibliography, index. $45.00, cloth; $19.95, paper.

Reviewed by Max Despain, United States Air Force Academy

Lisa Yoneyama takes on the dialectics of memory about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima with all of her academic guns blazing. Addressing the important role memory plays in the post-war reconstruction of Hiroshima and Japan in *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory*, she describes survivors' memories and the impact those memories have had on rebuilding a new Japan. Her work does not address American responsibility or memories except as a barely present periphery in the emotions of some survivors; however, her ultimate lessons about critical vigilance of our own realities and her warning against complacency are important.

The well-known critics of memory theory such as Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, and Theodor Adorno provide the theoretical basis of Yoneyama's argument. Absent from her effort is any mention of Asian theorists on memory, begging the question whether such theorists exist or were not sought out. What is clear is that her discussion of Asian forms of memory is based entirely on European memory theorists' work. Despite this disconnect, Yoneyama artfully addresses memory within her chosen context.

Yoneyama begins with a discussion of the winning design for Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park, a design that is nearly identical to the plan proposed by the same designer for a pre-war "Commemorative Building Project for the Construction of Greater East Asia" (1) celebrating Japan's imperialist efforts. The similarity of the two projects underscores Yoneyama's claim that, whether the majority of Japan remembers Hiroshima's atomic bombing as "victimization experienced by the Japanese" or in a "universalistic narrative… [as] an unprecedented event in the history of humanity" (3), these memories are based on forgetting the imperialist role of the prewar Japanese Empire.

The dialectics of memory about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, the self-proclaimed city of peace, emerge in Part One, "Cartographies of Memory," as opposing impulses. The first is toward a "brightness" that seeks to cover up all associations with the bombing; the second dwells on the gloomy memories of devastated Hiroshima and retards the city's movement into the future. In Chapter 2, "Memories in

Ruins," Yoneyama gives the dialectic concrete embodiment in her outline of the community debate over whether to renovate, destroy, or maintain three different structures that remained standing after the bombing. The arguments for destruction or renovation again indicate a need to move forward while the arguments for maintaining the sites claim the move forward requires forgetting the past.

Part Two: "Storytellers," serves up the testimony of atomic bomb survivors and is perhaps the most interesting part of Yoneyama's work. She intends the chapters to "contemplate the nature of knowledge produced through [*hibakushas'* or atomic bomb survivors'] storytellings" (86), a knowledge that turns out to be anything but fixed and stable. A large number of *hibakusha*, she reports in Chapter 3, "On Testimonial Practices," have been reluctant to tell their stories because of discrimination against atomic bomb survivors. Despite this discrimination, however, and their own dismay at "the incommunicability of their experiences," the survivors were so "disappointed by both visual and written representations of nuclear holocausts" (89) that they felt compelled to tell their stories. The multiple perspectives represented by the narratives in Chapter 4, "Mnemonic Detours," Yoneyama suggests, compel "audiences to envision the possibility that the suffering and agony of an enormous number of war victims…might have been averted, that they were never inevitable" (135).

The book's third and final part, "Memory and Positionality" addresses the memories of people outside the dominant Japanese sphere. In Chapter 5, "Ethnic and Colonial Memories," once again a physical monument crystallizes the problematic role of the Japanese in the events surrounding the bombing. The memorial for Koreans killed by the atomic bomb, Yoneyama argues, reflects the debate over the current status of Koreans choosing to live in Japan. The memorial has been placed outside the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in a seldom-traveled area, and a portion of the controversial inscription outlining Japan's colonialism in Korea has been blacked over. Says Yoneyama, the way the Japanese government has handled this memorial raises the question of "how the Japanese government should face its responsibilities for colonialism and the war of invasion" and represents "yet another attempt to contain and domesticate some of the many memories that threaten to disrupt the seemingly self-evident knowledge in contemporary Japan about the nation's past" (154, 176).

Yoneyama's final chapter, "The Feminization of Memory," extends

the previous chapter's analysis revealing the links between Japan's marginalized groups and atomic bomb discourse. As was the case with the various memorials discussed earlier in the book, we see that Japanese women, in the aftermath of the bomb, themselves became the battleground for opposing cultural representations. One version saw them as liberated from the "patriarchal authority of the state, from militarism, and from the prewar household system" (188). On the other hand, women activists developed a platform based on their maternal protective instinct and became associated with the ordinary as housewives. Ultimately, Yoneyama argues that despite the tropes of "peace, statehood, motherhood, anti-imperialism, and the quotidian" placed on Japanese women, female support of imperialist activities in prewar Japan as well as their activity in postwar Japan show them to be not merely "[i]nnocent victims of the prewar and wartime imperial system, of masculine militarism, and the postwar U.S. nuclear dominance in the region" (208).

Yoneyama concludes her detailed work with a statement based on Walter Benjamin's historical materialism, saying "we must also explore the promises and alternative historical trajectories that were never realized" (210). The theme of the unrealized permeates her work. She urges us to critically engage our reality to help prevent things like "the ghastly experience of atomic obliteration" (214) from ever taking place. Instead, we can realize the "promise of alternative historical trajectories" through our own vigilance about our present realities.

I do have one criticism for Yoneyama. Despite her detail and thorough research, her high academic prose makes reading the book more difficult than it might be—a flaw she seems to acknowledge when she thanks her Japanese editors for "constantly reminding me of the scholarly responsibility to reach as broad an audience as possible" (x). She needed to take those reminders more to heart.

As I read this book on August 6, 2000, I caught a short sound bite on CNN discussing the Japanese memorialization of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. A mere 55 years after the fact, the event has nearly disappeared from the American consciousness and warrants only cursory treatment on national television. Fortunately, Yoneyama's talented and thorough discussion of the ever-present effects of the bomb's devastation on Japan, particularly Hiroshima, serves to remind us that the aftershock of one U.S. bomb continues to be felt today.